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AIR COMMANDO



TOP

**SOCCER STAR
BOBBY
CHARLTON..**



writes a "top" football story about



**...that top
football
character—
"ROY of the
ROVERS"...**

every week in

TIGER

Tuesdays—4½d.

★ *All boys vote—"ITS TOPS!"*

AIR COMMANDO



THE FIRST GLIDER-BORNE CHINDIT INVASION OF JAP-HELD BURMA ROSE UP ONE MOONLIT NIGHT. IN MARCH, 1944 AND SWEEPED OVER ENEMY-HELD JUNGLE TO DESCEND UPON A CHOSEN CLEARING WHICH WAS DESTINED TO EARN UNDYING FAME. THEY NAMED IT BROADWAY. BUT SKILFUL THOUGH THE AIRMEN OF THE AMERICAN AIR TASK FORCE WERE, UNEXPECTED SNAGS EXACTED A GRIM TOLL OF VALUABLE LIVES.

*Chapter 1.***JUNGLE AIRLIFT**

JUNGLE BROADWAY, FORTIFIED AND FED FROM THE AIR BY AMERICAN DAKOTAS, SOON PROVED ITS TACTICAL WORTH. BUT THE EARLY CASUALTIES AND HAZARDS WERE STILL IN THE MINDS OF MEN AT THE BRIGADE H.Q. AT GHATALAT WHEN A PARTY OF FRESHLY-TRAINED CHINDITS ARRIVED, EAGER FOR THEIR FIRST TASTE OF JUNGLE FIGHTING.



THESE JUNGLE TRAINEES MAY HAVE LOOKED YOUNG, BUT THEY WERE ALL SEASONED CAMPAIGNERS FROM OTHER BATTLE ZONES. THERE WAS CORPORAL 'DOGGER' BANKS, TOUGH EX-DESERT RAT, FOR EXAMPLE...

I TELL YOU, AFTER TOBRUK THIS JUNGLE LARK OUGHTA BE A FLIPPING WALKOVER!

GOOD OLD DUNNIT-ALL-MESELF 'DOGGER'!



THE LEADER OF THIS CONTINGENT, MAJOR MALCOLM McDUFF, D.S.O., HAD SO FAR SHARED HIS MEN'S HIGH HUMOUR, BUT AS HIS EYES NOW SWEEPED THE SCENE AROUND, THE SMILE LEFT HIS LEAN FACE.

THE OLD PLACE HAS CHANGED, DRIVER... AMERICANS EVERYWHERE!

YOU'RE RIGHT, SIR. GHATALAT'S GONE ALL YANKEE SINCE YOU'VE BEEN AWAY.



VETERAN OF TWO JUNGLE CAMPAIGNS, THE RANGY SCOT HAD BEEN SENT BACK-COUNTRY TO TRAIN FRESH JUNGLE FORCES IN THE RIGOROUS CHINDIT TRADITION OF WHICH HE WAS JEALOUSLY PROUD. NOW HE RETURNED TO ONE DISTURBING DISCOVERY AFTER ANOTHER.

THE RUDE REMARKS OF TWO AMERICAN GROUND CREW ONLY INCREASED MALCOLM'S TROUBLED THOUGHTS AS HE HASTENED TO REPORT TO HIS COMMANDING OFFICER, BRIGADIER KNOX.

YE GODS! GLIDERS IN BURMA! IS EVERYBODY OFF THEIR ROCKERS?



HIYA, SCOTTIE!

LOST YOUR KILT, BUD?



Air Commando

HE FOUND THAT CHEERFUL BUT TOUGH LITTLE BRIGADIER SURROUNDED BY MAPS, PAPERS AND SUPPORTING STAFF. HE GREETED MALCOLM WARMLY...

MY WORD, YOU'RE ONLY JUST IN TIME, MALCOLM! THE AIRLIFT INVASION ON HARRINGAY - THE NEW JUNGLE BASE - HAS BEEN ADVANCED FOUR DAYS.

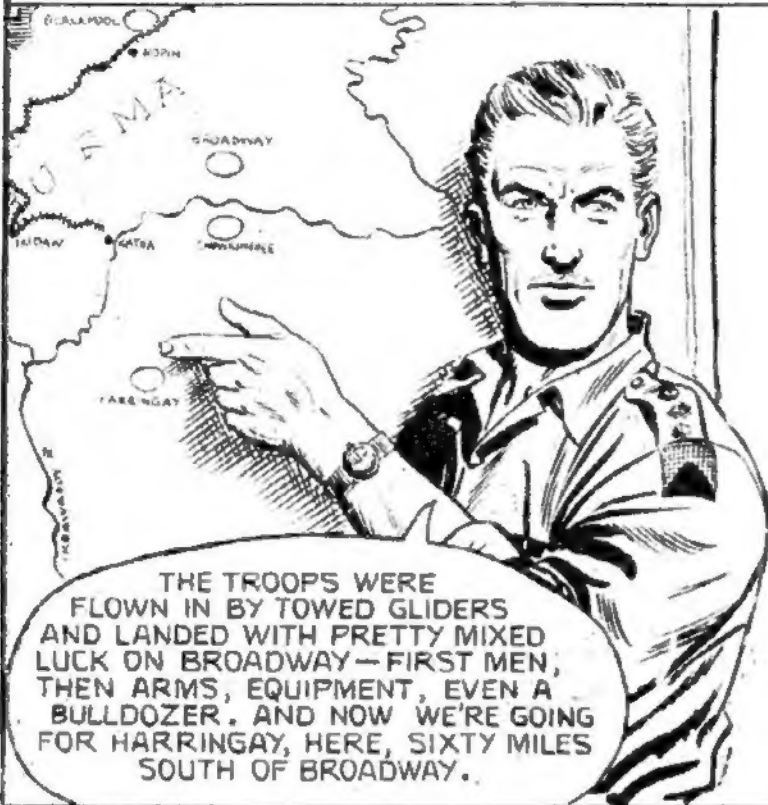
AIRLIFT?



MALCOLM'S SHARP QUERY BROUGHT A SUDDEN SILENCE. THEN KNOX ANSWERED QUIETLY...



PLEADING PRESSURE OF WORK, KNOX HANDED THE SET-FACED MALCOLM OVER TO A YOUNG CAPTAIN, WHO DESCRIBED THE BEGINNINGS ALREADY MADE IN THE NEW BURMA OFFENSIVE...



THE TROOPS WERE FLOWN IN BY TOWED GLIDERS AND LANDED WITH PRETTY MIXED LUCK ON BROADWAY—FIRST MEN, THEN ARMS, EQUIPMENT, EVEN A BULLDOZER. AND NOW WE'RE GOING FOR HARRINGAY, HERE, SIXTY MILES SOUTH OF BROADWAY.



YOU TALK OF GLIDERS LANDING WITH MIXED LUCK. HOW MIXED?

THERE WERE SOME SMASH-UPS ON LANDING—OTHERS DID NOT FIND THE LANDING STRIP AND DROPPED IN THE JUNGLE. WE LOST QUITE A FEW MEN...



Air Commando

THAT EVENING THE BRIGADIER SOON SENSED THAT HE HAD SOMETHING OF A REBEL ON HIS HANDS.

ALL WE ASKED, SIR, WAS FOR LIGHT PLANES TO FLY IN SUPPLIES AND TO EVACUATE THE WOUNDED. INSTEAD WE HAVE AN AMERICAN AIR FORCE WHICH DOESN'T KNOW THE FIRST THING ABOUT JUNGLE FIGHTING TELLING US HOW TO RUN A JOB WHICH WE CHINDITS HAVE FOUGHT AND DIED TO LEARN!



TIMES HAVE CHANGED, MALCOLM. THE OLD PUNISHING MARCHES THROUGH JUNGLE HAVE BEEN SUCCEEDED BY FLIGHT. WE'VE PROVED THAT AT BROADWAY.

YES, BUT AT WHAT COST IN CHINDIT LIVES? LOOK, SIR, I'VE GOT FRESH TROOPS UNUSED TO GLIDERS. GIVE ME MULES, AND I'LL GRAB ANY BASE YOU WANT... IN THE TRUE CHINDIT MANNER.



AT THIS MOMENT A SHORT THICK-SET FIGURE STROLLED AMIABLY INTO THE ROOM. KNOX ROSE TO HIS FEET...

THIS IS SAM BOLEY, ONE OF OUR BEST GLIDER PILOTS.



SAM BOLEY SUFFERED MALCOLM'S SHARP LOOK IMPERTURBABLY AND A GRIN SPLIT HIS GOOD-NATURED FACE.

MULES DID I HEAR YOU SAY?
THERE'S JUST NO TIME FOR
MULES NOW, MAJOR. US AIR
COMMANDOS HAVE CHANGED
ALL THAT - AND I'LL TELL
YOU HOW...

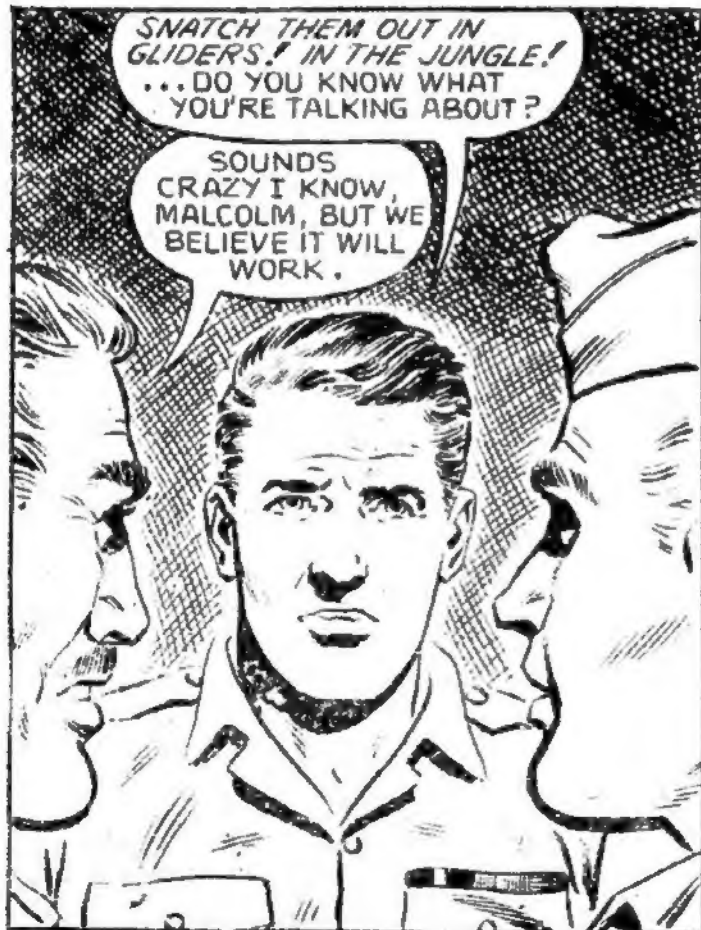


MALCOLM LISTENED TO THE AMERICAN'S COLOURFUL CLAIMS IN GRUDGING SILENCE.

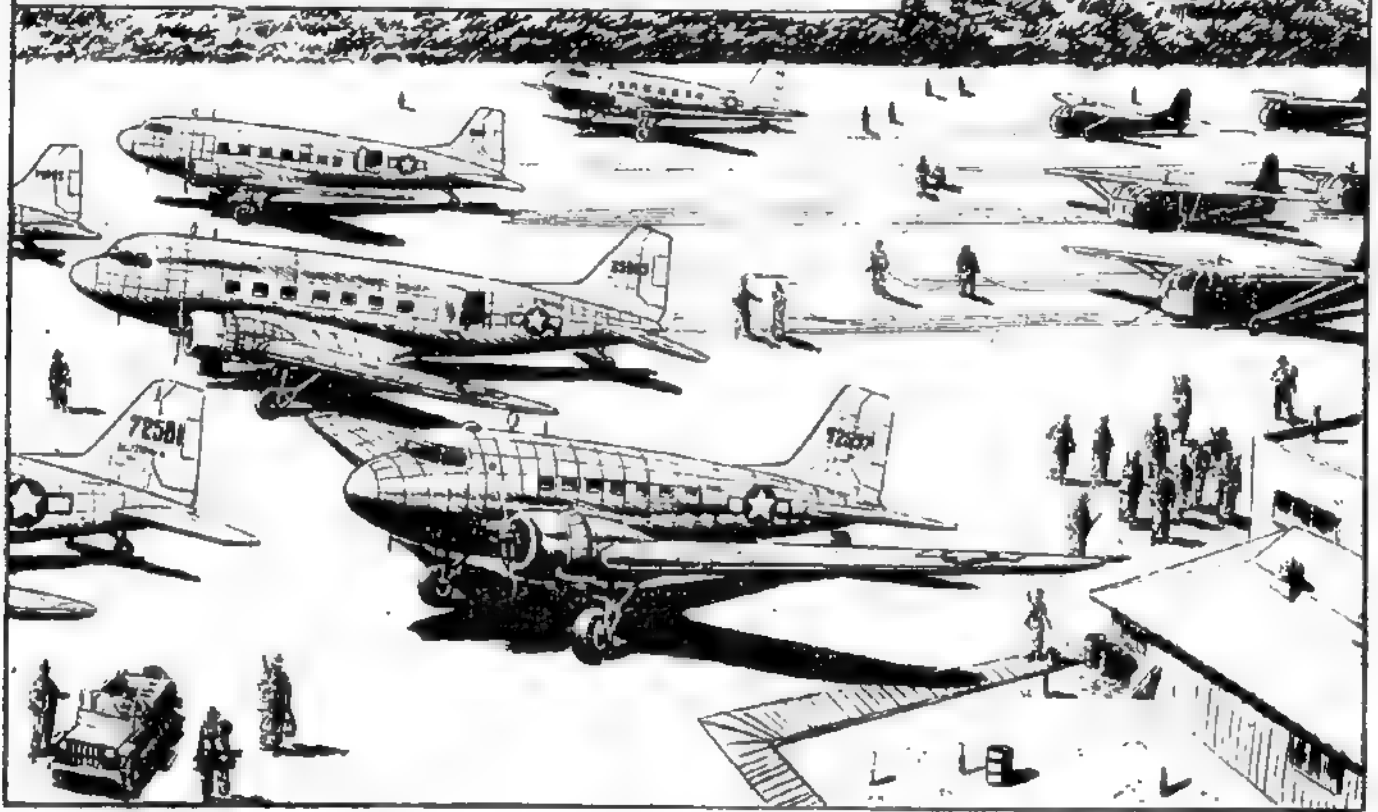
WE'VE GOT EVERYTHING, MAJOR-
GLIDERS TO TAKE YOUR MEN IN,
DAKOTAS TO KEEP YOU SUPPLIED,
MITCHELL BOMBERS TO SUPPORT
YOUR ATTACKS AND PURSUIT
PLANES TO KEEP AIR
SUPERIORITY. WHAT MORE
CAN YOU WANT?



Air Commando



NEXT MORNING, THE STAND-BY SIGNAL FOR "OPERATION HARRINGAY" CAME THROUGH. BY MIDDAY THE TAKE-OFF WAS CONFIRMED FOR 1840 HOURS—JUST AFTER SUNDOWN. ALREADY THE GLIDERS WERE MARSHALLED, THEIR TOW ROPES LAID IN ORDERLY LINES BEFORE THEM. DAKOTA TUG-PLANES WERE WARMING UP.



THE ROLE OF MALCOLM AND HIS MEN WAS SIMPLE BUT HAZARDOUS.

MAJOR McDUFF—YOU AND YOUR MEN ARE TO EMBARK IN THE FIRST BATCH OF GLIDERS. ON LANDING AT HARRINGAY YOU WILL SEIZE THE STRIP AND DEFEND IT AGAINST POSSIBLE ATTACK UNTIL THE BASE IS ESTABLISHED.

I UNDERSTAND, SIR.



THE DIE WAS CAST. NONE OF MALCOLM'S MISGIVINGS ABOUT GLIDERS MATTERED NOW.

Air Commando

COMING AWAY FROM THE BRIEFING, THE SCOT PASSED THE INFORMATION ON TO HIS MEN. HE WAS NOT ANXIOUS ABOUT THEIR ROLE ON THE GROUND, ONLY OF THE METHOD OF GETTING THEM THERE.

ONCE THE STRONGHOLD IS ESTABLISHED, OUR MAIN JOB WILL BE TO STRIKE OFF INTO THE JUNGLE TO ATTACK AND CUT JAP SUPPLY LINES —AND KEEP THEM CUT! ANY QUESTIONS?



IT SEEMED THERE WERE DOUBTS IN THE MINDS OF THE MEN, TOO. EX-DESERT RAT, 'DOGGER' BANKS, ROSE UP TO EXPRESS IN A NUTSHELL MALCOLM'S OWN MISGIVINGS.

BUT, SIR... TWO GLIDERS IN TANDEM! IT'LL BE MURDER!



WE MUST HAVE CONFIDENCE IN THE AMERICAN PILOTS, BANKS — THEY KNOW THEIR JOB, I'M SURE.

THEN LEADERS AND MEN
WERE SECTIONED OFF,
TWENTY-FOUR MEN
AND EQUIPMENT TO A
GLIDER . . .

HERE
THEY COME,
BOY!

THIS
IS IT!



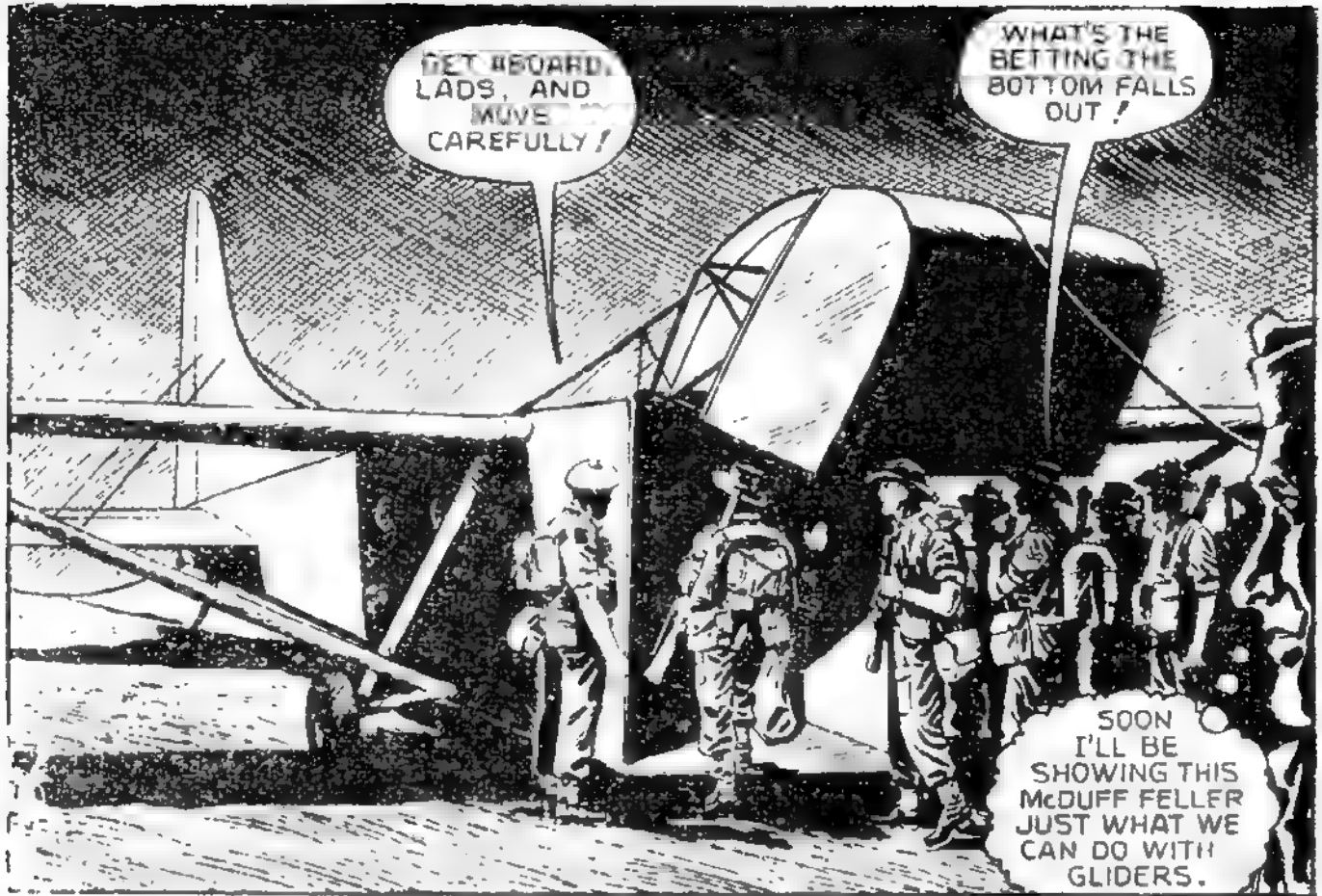
AS MALCOLM AND HIS PARTY DREW NEAR TO THE
LEADING GLIDER, A FAMILIAR FIGURE ROSE
FROM ITS HAUNCHES AND GAVE MALCOLM A LAZY
SALUTE. IT WAS GLIDER-PILOT SAM BOLEY.

I'M FLYING YOUR
CRATE, MAJOR.
COINCIDENCE,
AIN'T IT?

THAT'S
FINE!



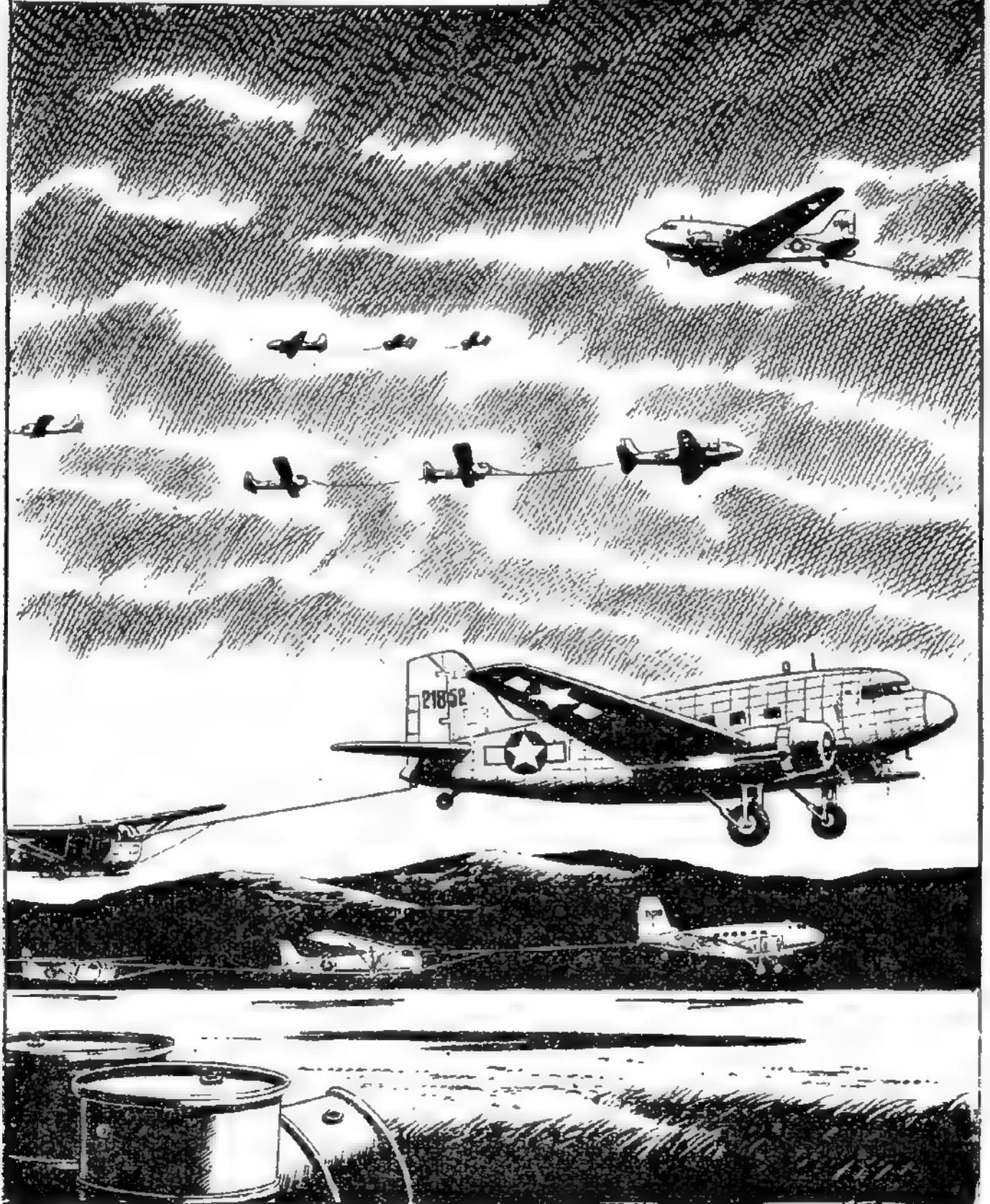
BUT MALCOLM WAS NOT SO EASILY DECEIVED. HE
GUESSED WITH AN INWARD SMILE THAT SAM
BOLEY MUST HAVE ARRANGED THIS.



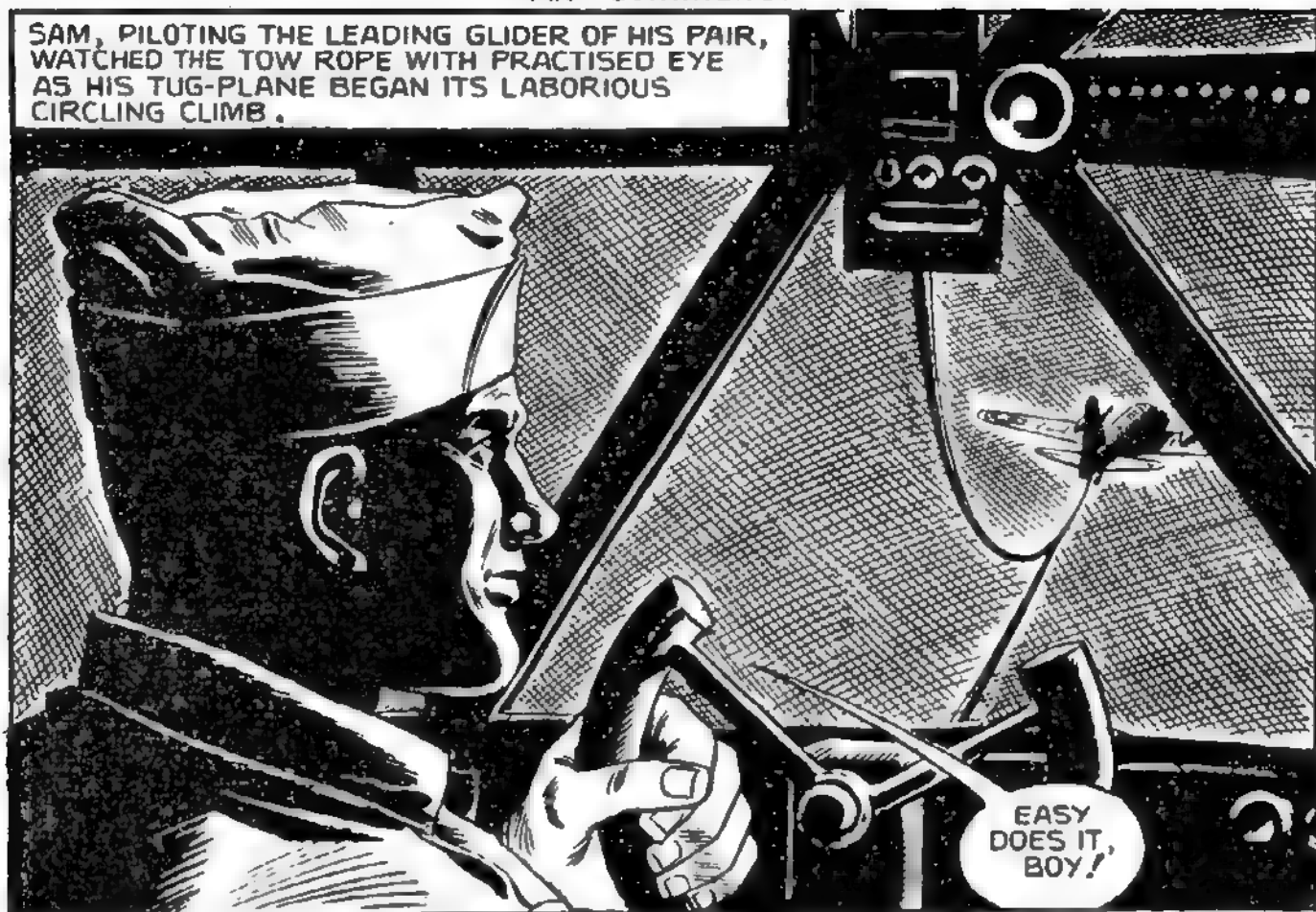
IT WAS ALMOST DARK WHEN THE FIRST TUG-PLANE, DRAWING ITS TWO GLIDERS, TOOK OFF. THEY WERE THE PATHFINDER TEAM. THEY CLIMBED IN SLOW STEADY TO EIGHT THOUSAND FEET AND THEN SET OFF.



AFTER TEN MINUTES THE MAIN WAVE FOLLOWED. ENGINES ROARING AT FULL BOOST, THE TUG-PLANES LUMBERED DOWN THE DARK FIELD, PRESENTLY TO LIFT PONDEROUSLY INTO THE JUNGLE SKY. NO LIGHTS WERE PERMITTED... RADIO SILENCE WAS IMPERATIVE. OPERATION HARRINGAY HAD BEGUN!



SAM, PILOTING THE LEADING GLIDER OF HIS PAIR, WATCHED THE TOW ROPE WITH PRACTISED EYE AS HIS TUG-PLANE BEGAN ITS LABORIOUS CIRCLING CLIMB.



WITH NOTHING TO HEAR BUT THE WHISPERING FLIGHT OF THE GLIDER, THE SILENCE IN MALCOLM'S MACHINE WAS TENSE UNTIL THE IRREPRESSIBLE 'DOGGY' BANKS BROKE THE SPELL.

WILL I BE ON A CHARGE IF I COUGH, SIR?



AS THE CHUCKLES WENT ROUND, MALCOLM FOUND HIMSELF LIKING THIS TOUGH LITTLE CORPORAL. HIS COCKNEY HIGH SPIRITS COULD BE INVALUABLE IN THE TESTING TIME AHEAD.

IN THE GLIDER COUPLED TO SAM BOLEY'S, A COMPANY OF SEPOYS, UNDER THE VETERAN SUBADAR AMRI SINGH, WATCHED THEIR OWN TAKE OFF WITH AWE AND DELIGHT.

IN TRUTH, A HEAVENLY WAY TO GO TO BATTLE!

OUR ANCESTORS WOULD BE PROUD OF THEIR CHILDREN!



NEW YORK BORN PETE SKAUER, PILOTING THIS SECOND GLIDER, GRINNED AT THE CHATTER OF THESE SIMPLE YET FEARLESS SOLDIERS.

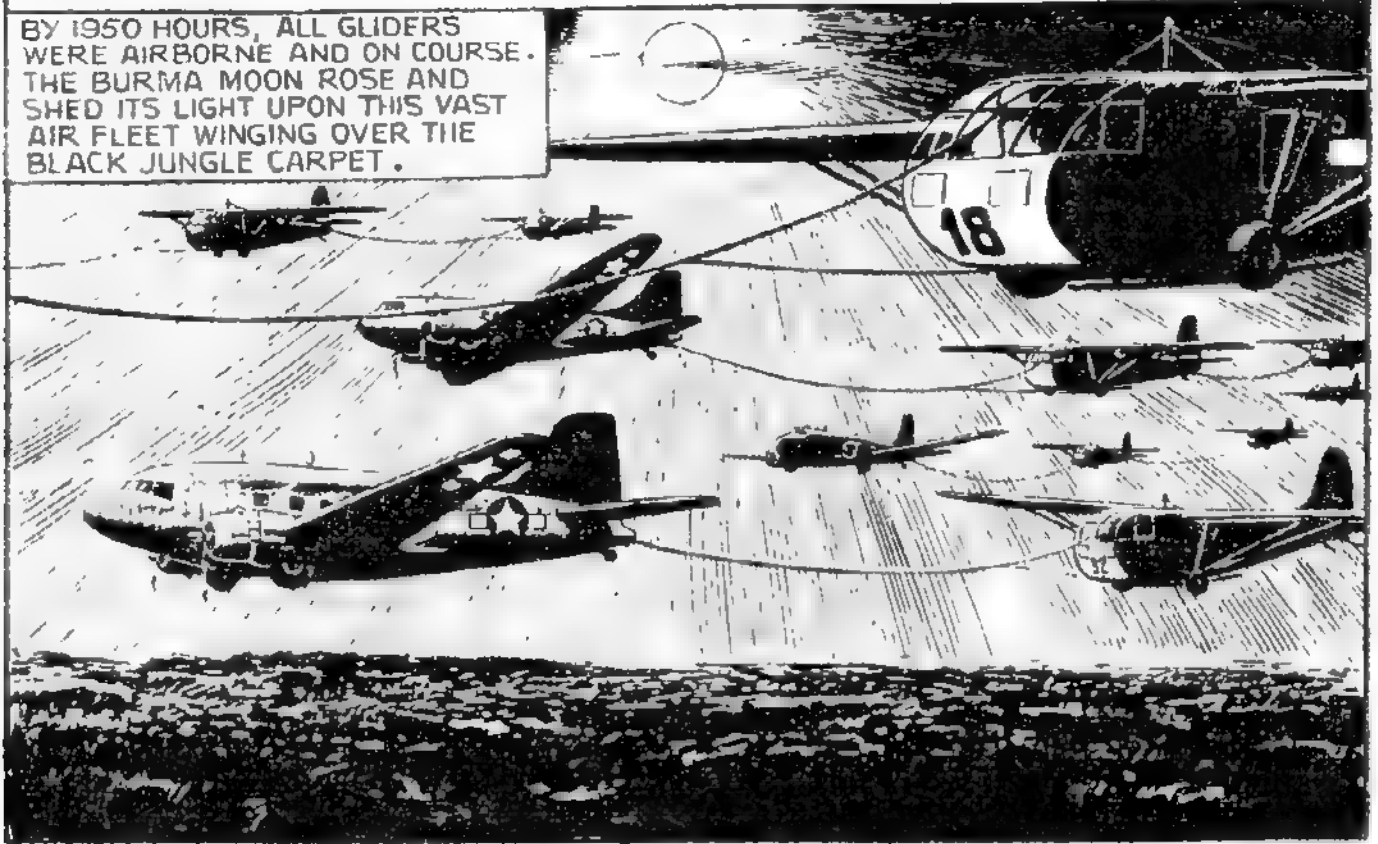
IN A TOUGH SPOT, I'D PICK YOUR BOYS EVERY TIME, SUBADAR!

YOUR GRACIOUS OPINION IS BELIEVED, SAHIB!

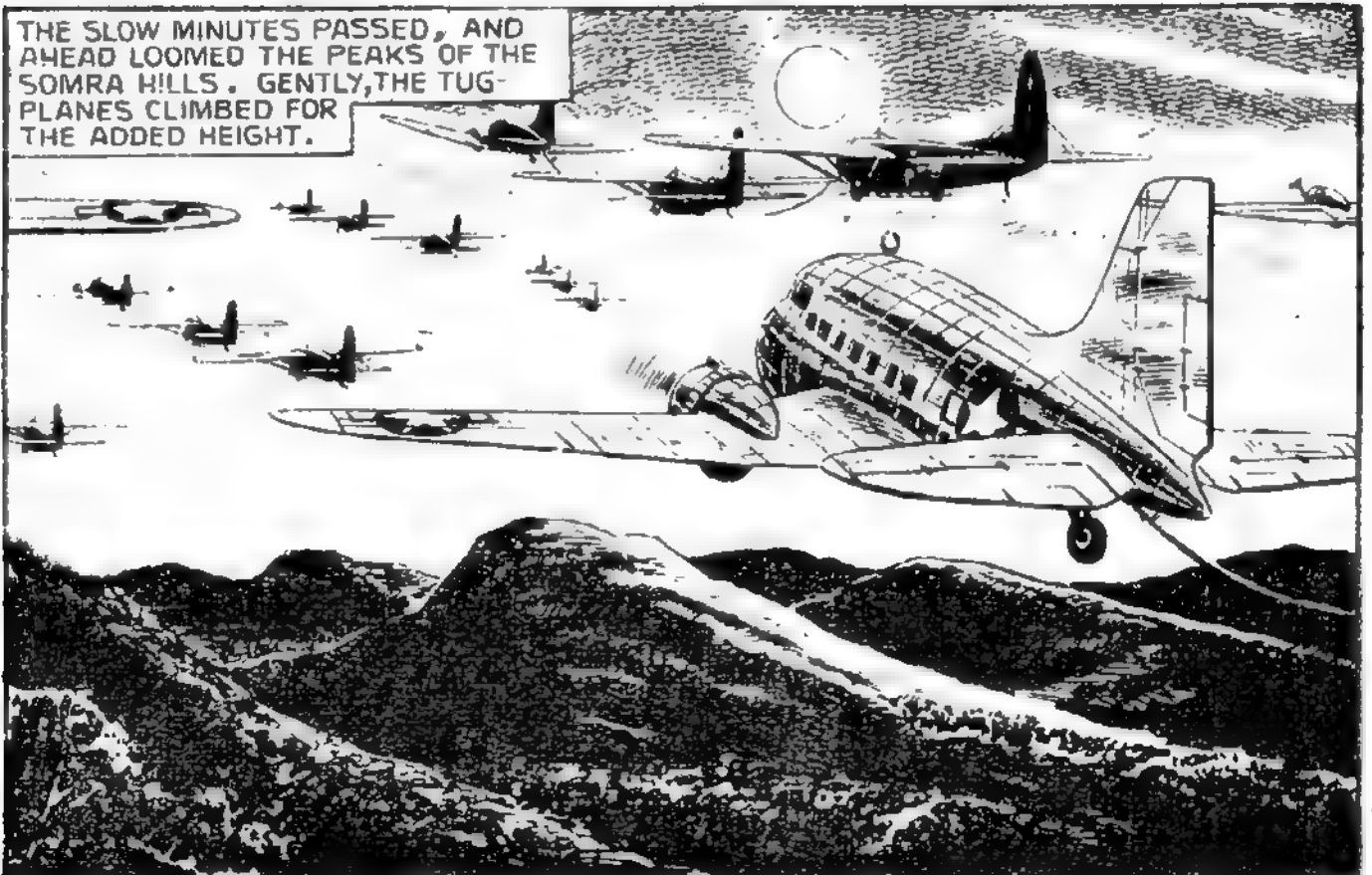


Chapter 2. CRASH LANDING

BY 1950 HOURS, ALL GLIDERS WERE AIRBORNE AND ON COURSE. THE BURMA MOON ROSE AND SHED ITS LIGHT UPON THIS VAST AIR FLEET WINGING OVER THE BLACK JUNGLE CARPET.



THE SLOW MINUTES PASSED, AND AHEAD LOOMED THE PEAKS OF THE SOMRA HILLS. GENTLY, THE TUG-PLANES CLIMBED FOR THE ADDED HEIGHT.



SAFELY OVER THIS RANGE, THE GLIDER FORCE PRESSED ON. THE RIVER CHINDWIN WAS CROSSED AND THEY WERE OVER ENEMY COUNTRY.

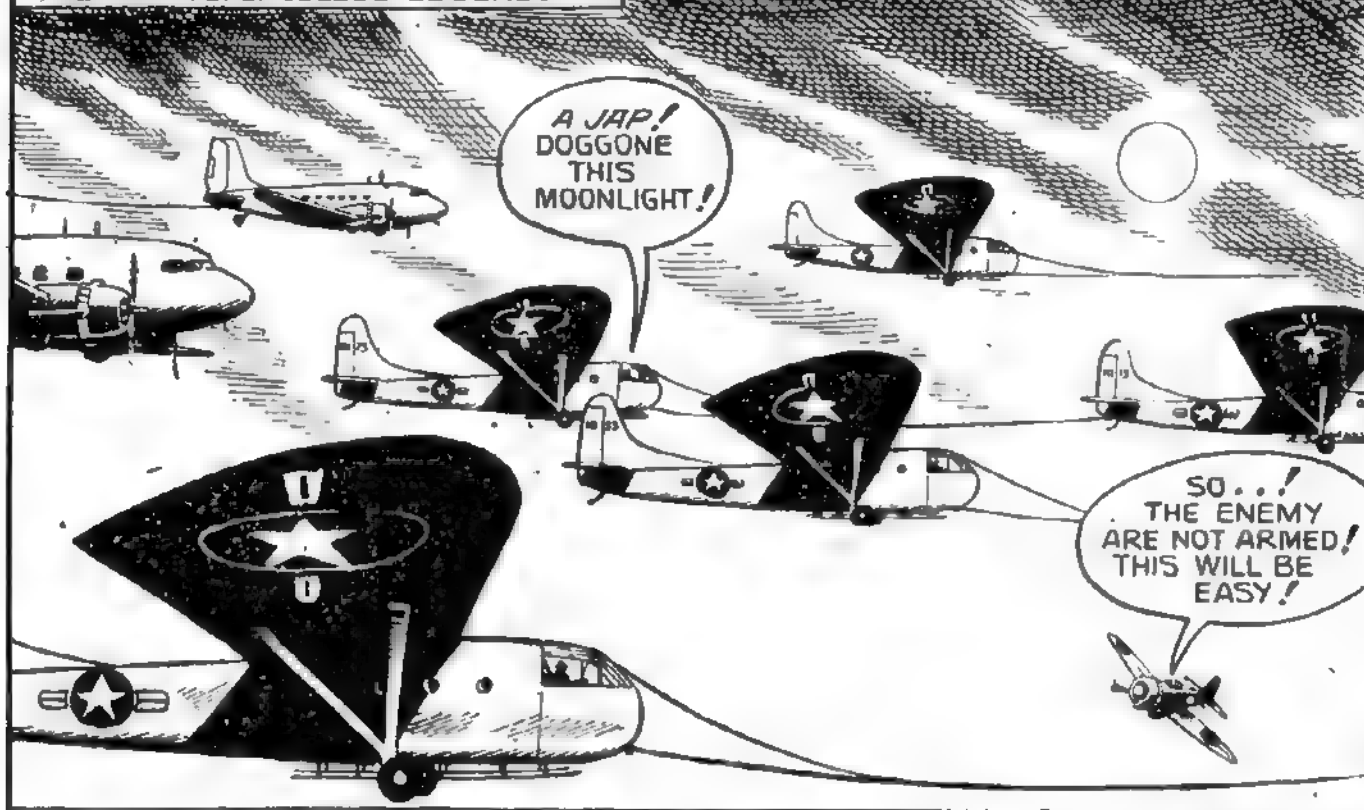


BUT AS THE ONCE FRIENDLY MOONLIGHT GATHERED STRENGTH IT REVEALED THE GLIDER FORCE TO A JAP ZERO RETURNING FROM A LONG-RANGE PATROL...

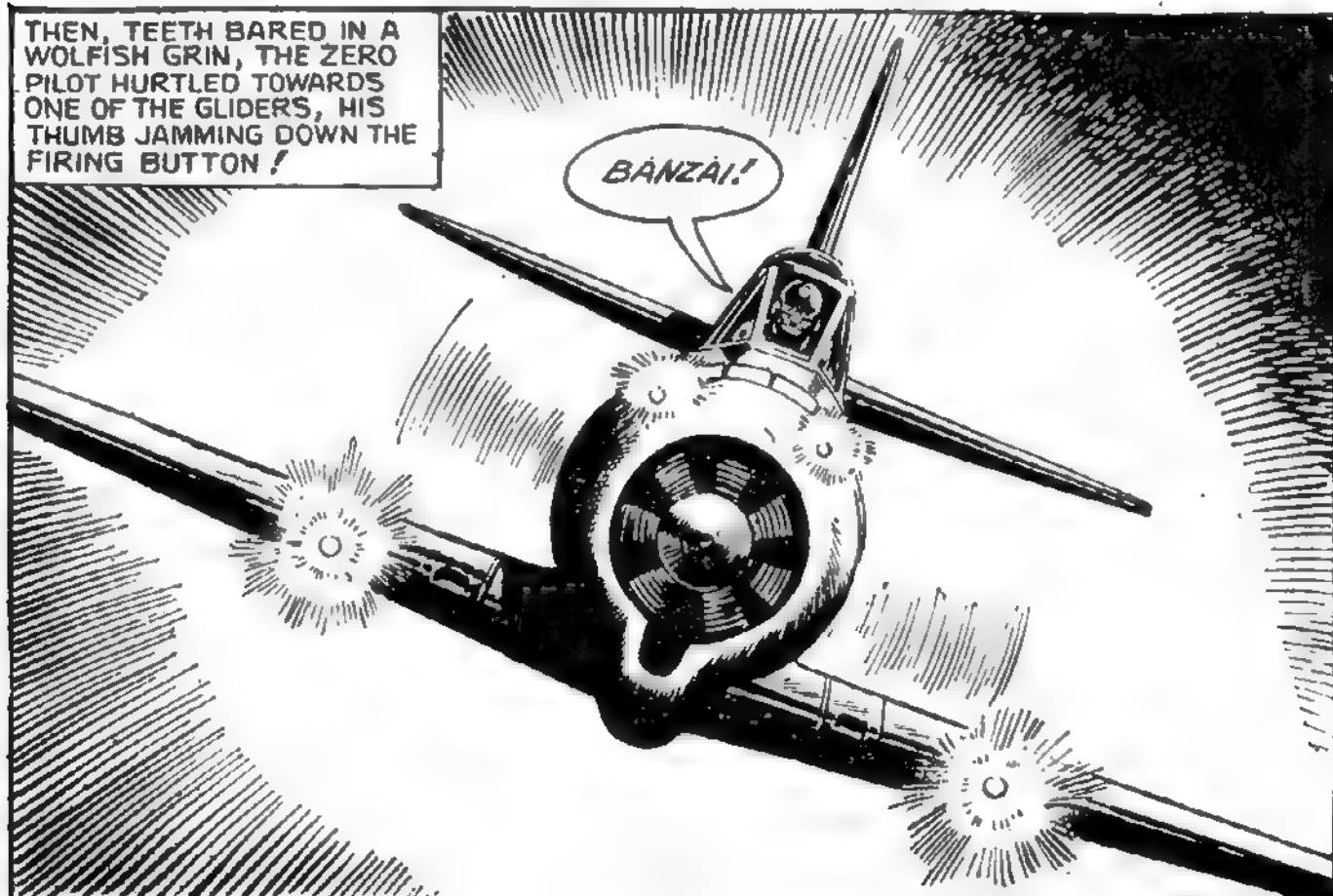


AIRCRAFT!
MANY ENEMY
AIRCRAFT! I MUST
LOOK CLOSER!

AS THE JAP PILOT CLOSED IN HE SAW THAT THE ENEMY AIRCRAFT BORE NO GUN TURRETS... AND RECOGNISED THEM AS DEFENCELESS GLIDERS.



THEN, TEETH BARED IN A WOLFISH GRIN, THE ZERO PILOT HURTLIED TOWARDS ONE OF THE GLIDERS, HIS THUMB JAMMING DOWN THE FIRING BUTTON!



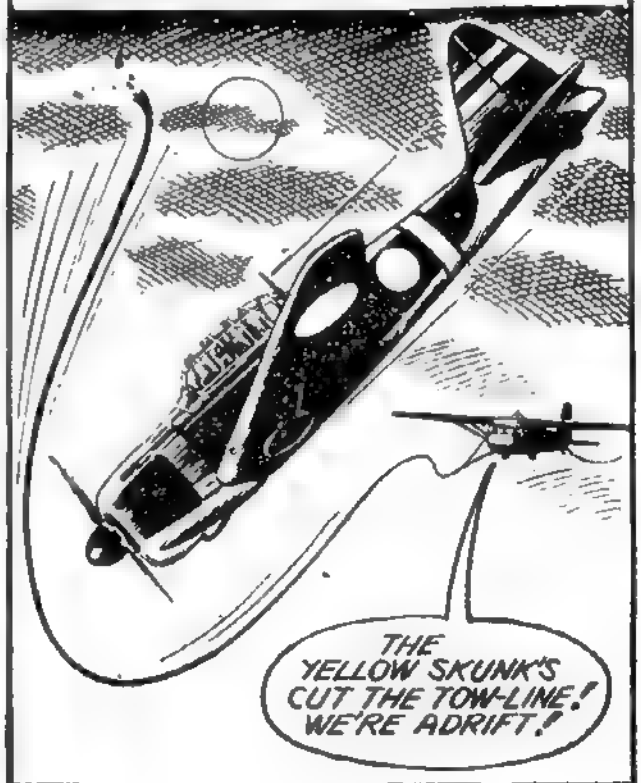
IT WAS SAM'S GLIDER THAT THE JAP SINGLED OUT FOR HIS ATTACK. THE AMERICAN INSTINCTIVELY DUCKED AS HOLES WERE PUNCHED ACROSS THE WINDOWS OF HIS CABIN...



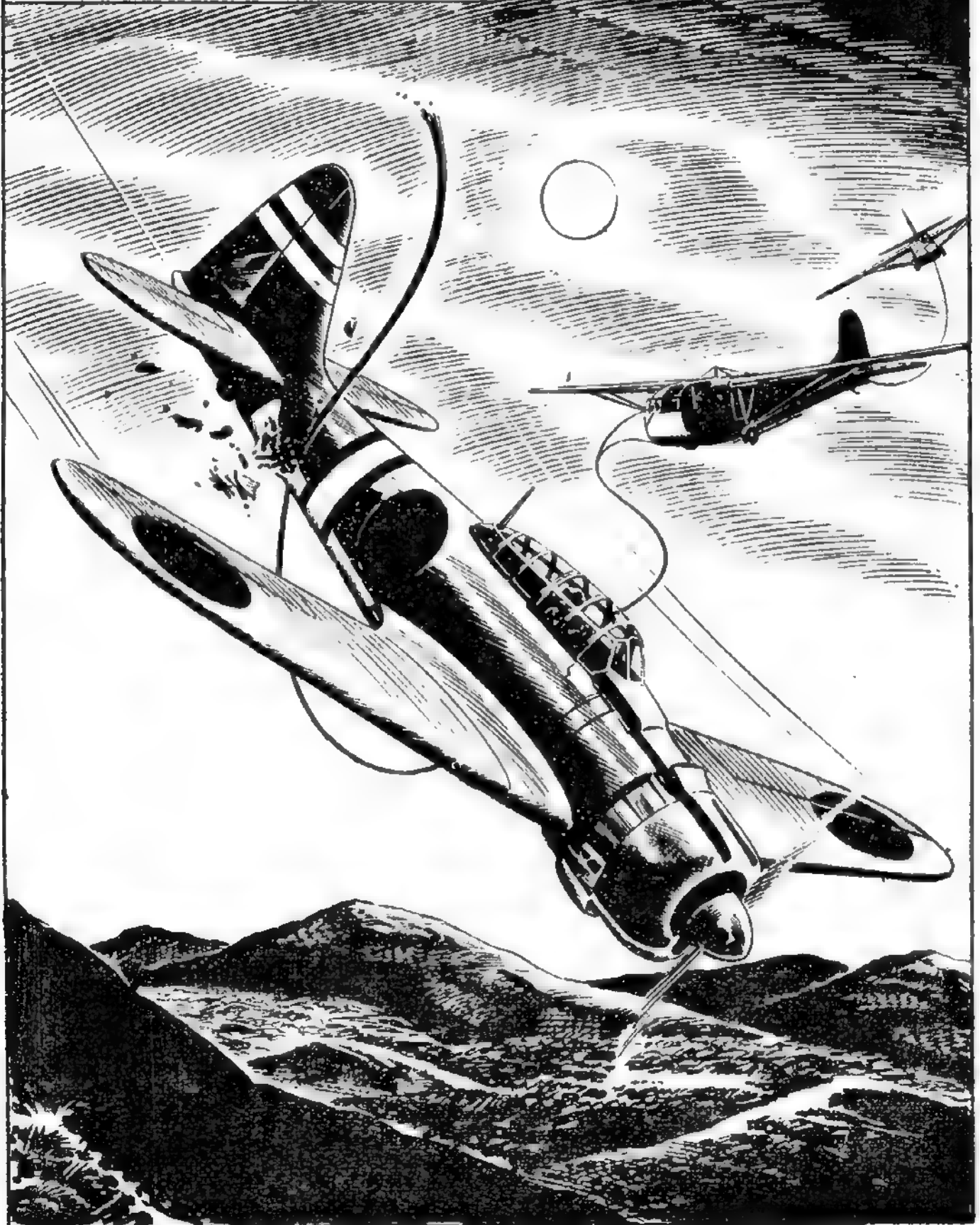
AGAIN, THE ZERO ATTACKED—GUN-FLAME LANCING AT SAM BOLEY'S GLIDER...



BUT THIS TIME THE JAP'S AIM WAS LESS SURE. HIS HEAVY CALIBRE CANNON SHELLS RIPPED INCHES PAST THE NOSE OF THE GLIDER... AND CUT CLEAN THROUGH THE TAUT TOW-LINE!



THE ZERO PILOT SCREAMED WITH FEAR AS HE SAW THE SEVERED TOW-LINE WHIP UP TOWARDS HIM. DESPERATELY, HE SIDE-SLIPPED... BUT THE ROPE SMASHED WITH TREMENDOUS FORCE ACROSS HIS TAIL...



SUDDENLY FREED FROM ITS TUG-PLANE, THE GLIDER REARED AND LUNGED, CAUSING SAM TO FIGHT THE CONTROLS WITH ALL HIS STRENGTH.



TO THE CHINDITS INSIDE THE GLIDER IT SEEMED AN ETERNITY BEFORE THE AMERICAN SUCCEEDED IN RIGHTING HIS MACHINE...



WHILE SAM USED ALL HIS SKILL TO KEEP THE GLIDER IN THE AIR, MALCOLM COOLLY UNFOLDED HIS MAP.

I RECKON THERE'S ANOTHER FIFTY MILES TO THE TARGET... DO YOU THINK YOU CAN MAKE IT?

NOT A HOPE, MAJOR!



THE GREAT SAIL PLANE WAS REMORSELESSLY LOSING HEIGHT, FOLLOWED UNHAPPILY BY PETE'S GLIDER.

THEN, SEEING THAT HIS CRAFT WAS A DRAG ON THE OTHER, PETE SLIPPED THE CABLE AND FLEW INDEPENDENTLY. BUT IT WAS TOO LATE. THEY WERE PERILOUSLY CLOSE TO THE DARK MASS OF JUNGLE FOLIAGE.

HEY! LOOK! THERE'S A CLEARING DOWN THERE. IT'S MIGHTY SMALL BUT IT'S BETTER THAN NOTHING!



THERE WAS NO TIME FOR ANYTHING BUT A FIRST-TIME LANDING...

HOLD ON TO YOUR HATS, FELLERS! HECK, WE'RE GOING IN CROSS WIND! LOOK OUT!

STAND BY FOR CRASH LANDING!



SLEWING WILDLY, THE GLIDER SKIMMED INTO THE TREES. A WING WAS RIPPED OFF, THE FUSELAGE BUCKLED...



MIRACULOUSLY UNINJURED, SAM SCRAMBLED OUT OF HIS SEAT AND PEERED ANXIOUSLY INTO THE DARKNESS OF THE FUSELAGE...

YOU
FELLERS OKAY?
HOW IS IT,
MAJOR?

WE'RE OKAY,
I THINK.

AND FOR THE FIRST TIME MALCOLM'S MATTER-OF-FACT TONES BROUGHT SAM RELIEF RATHER THAN THE USUAL EXASPERATION.



NOBODY WAS SERIOUSLY HURT. THEN, SUDDENLY, SAM REMEMBERED THE OTHER GLIDER. HE RACED TOWARDS THE CLEARING TO WAVE A WARNING...

MIND THE CROSS WIND, PETE!



BUT PETE MISTOOK SAM'S SIGNAL FOR ENCOURAGEMENT...

LOOK, THERE'S MY BUDDY WAVING US IN. HERE WE GO!



THE SECOND GLIDER HIT HARD, CANNONING FROM TREE TO TREE AS IT SKIDDED INTO THE UNDERGROWTH. ONCE AGAIN, HOWEVER, THE PILOT ESCAPED WHAT SEEMED CERTAIN DEATH.

IS IT BAD IN THERE, SOLDIER?



WE REJOICE THAT OUR INFERIOR LIVES HAVE BEEN SPARED! WE ARE ALL IN ONE PIECE!

AS SAM PUT A STEADYING HAND ON PETE'S SHOULDER, MALCOLM AND SOME OF HIS MEN DASHED UP TO THE WRECKAGE...



TEAR THIS
COVERING OFF!
LET'S GET THEM
OUT OF THERE!

A TRICKY
LANDING, PETE!
HOW D'YOU
FEEL?

I'LL
BE BETTER
WHEN THIS
GROUND STOPS
SPINNING!

SAM BOLEY'S EYES WERE BLEAK AS HE LOOKED AT THE TOTAL RUIN OF HIS PROUD CLAIMS...



WE WASHED
THAT UP, PETE!
BUT McDUFF'S GOT TO
KNOW WE'RE STILL
RIGHT ABOUT
GLIDERS!

SAM MADE TO LURCH TOWARDS THE TALL SCOT BUT CHECKED THE IMPULSE. McDUFF SEEMED TO HAVE HIS HANDS FULL. IT WAS NOT THE TIME FOR EXCUSES.

HOLD THAT MAN, SUBADAR, THE POOR FELLOW'S HALF CRAZY.

IT IS THE SHOCK, MAJOR SAHIB, HE SOON BE BETTER!



UNEASY IN THE AIR, MALCOLM WAS INSTANTLY IN HIS ELEMENT ON THE JUNGLE FLOOR. THIS WAS WHAT HE HAD TRAINED FOR—TO STAY ALIVE IN THE JUNGLE NO MATTER WHAT THE ODDS.

... AND THE REST OF YOU FAN OUT IN A CIRCLE IN CASE THERE ARE ANY JAPS AROUND.



AFTER THE INJURED HAD BEEN CARED FOR, MALCOLM CALLED A COUNCIL...

WE'LL MOUNT THE INJURED ON BAMBOO STRETCHERS AND MARCH FOR HARRINGAY. IT'S ABOUT A FIVE DAYS' TREK, I RECKON.

FIVE DAYS IS JUST A STROLL TO THE MAJOR.

SURE, WE'LL BE OKAY WITH HIM!



NOT A WORD HAD BEEN SPOKEN TO THE AMERICAN GLIDER PILOTS AND THEY WATCHED DISPIRITEDLY AS MALCOLM ISSUED FIRM, CONFIDENT ORDERS . . .

I GUESS THEY THINK WE TALKED TOO BIG ABOUT GLIDERS, HUH ?

WE KNOW IT CAN BE DONE THOUGH, PETE. IT WAS JUST GOSH DARN BAD LUCK MEETING UP WITH THAT JAP.



ANXIOUS TO PUT SOME MILES BETWEEN THEMSELVES AND THE TELL-TALE GLIDERS BEFORE DAYBREAK, MALCOLM LED THEM ON A NORTHERLY COURSE FOR DISTANT HARRINGAY.

REMEMBER YOUR TRAINING, CHINDITS, AND THE JUNGLE WILL BE YOUR FRIEND.

YOU'RE RIGHT, SIR . . . THESE LEECHES JUST LOVE ME!



Chapter 3. CHINDIT AMBUSH

FOR TWO DAYS THE COLUMN HACKED A PATH THROUGH THE MATTED JUNGLE AND THEN THEY BROKE OUT OF THE UNDERGROWTH ON TO A GRASSY SLOPE. INSTANTLY, A CRY WENT UP...

LOOK, SIR,
A TRAIN!

A JAP
SUPPLY ROUTE,
BY JUPITER!



SLIPPING BACK INTO THE JUNGLE, THE CHINDITS MADE CAMP WHILE MALCOLM PIN-POINTED THE HILL.

WHAT
DID THE MAJOR
CALL THIS PLACE,
DOGGER?

SOUNDED LIKE
CHUKKERDUCK
HILL!

SEE THAT
THERE IS NO SMOKE
FROM THE FIRES, SUBADAR,
THEN TELL EVERYONE
I WANT TO SPEAK
TO THEM.



THE JAPANESE-HELD RAILWAY WAS A PERFECT OBJECTIVE FOR JUNGLE RAIDERS, AND WHEN THE MEN GATHERED BEFORE HIM, MALCOLM'S PLANS WERE ALREADY HALF FORMED...

I RECKON THIS JAP RAILWAY IS FEEDING THE THIRTY-FIRST JAPANESE DIVISION UP NORTH OPPOSING GENERAL STILWELL'S ARMY. MY INTENTION IS TO CUT THIS LINE AND HELP STARVE THOSE JAPS OF ARMS, FOOD AND REINFORCEMENTS.



MALCOLM WARMED TO HIS MEN'S ENTHUSIASM...

CUTTING THE LINE WILL BE SIMPLE. CAN WE KEEP IT CUT LONG ENOUGH TO MAKE ITS EFFECT FELT?

WE'LL NEED FOOD... AMMUNITION.

NO REASON WHY WE SHOULDN'T TAKE ALL WE WANT FROM THE JAPS!



THE NEXT DAY WAS SPENT SECURING A BASE ON THE HEIGHTS OF 'CHUKKERDUCK HILL' AND WHEN NIGHT CAME MALCOLM LED HIS MEN DOWN TO THE RAILWAY TRACK AND SUPERVISED THE PLACING OF EXPLOSIVE CHARGES. SAM AND PETE LOOKED ON WITH INTEREST.

I'M BEGINNING TO THINK THIS MCDUFF IS NO SLOUCH.

YEAH, HE SURE SEEMS TO KNOW WHAT HE'S ABOUT.





AS MALCOLM WAITED FOR THE FUSES TO RUN THEIR DREAD COURSE, HE FOUND THE TWO AMERICANS GRINNING BESIDE HIM. INSTANTLY, HE SENSED THEIR CHANGED ATTITUDE...



NEXT MOMENT, THE NIGHT WAS RENT BY A SERIES OF EXPLOSIONS THAT ECHOED FROM ONE SIDE OF THE VALLEY TO THE OTHER...



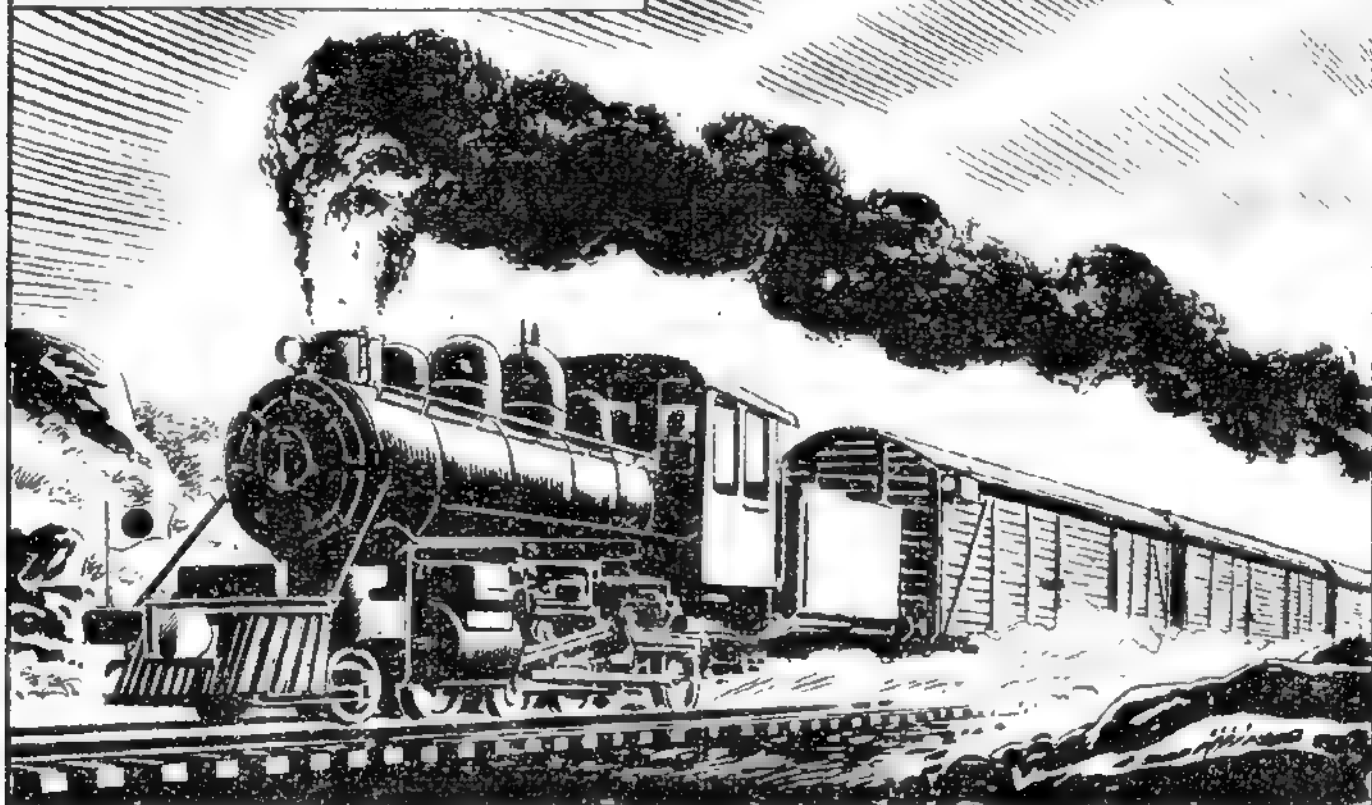
DARKNESS FELL AGAIN AND THE CHINDITS STUDIED THEIR HANDIWORK WITH GRINS OF SATISFACTION...



IT WAS NOT UNTIL DAWN THAT THEIR LONG VIGIL WAS REWARDED BY THE SOUND OF A TRAIN. AS ONE MAN, THE CHINDITS SLIPPED OFF THE SAFETY CATCHES ON THEIR WEAPONS...



THE TRAIN, BOUND, AS MALCOLM HAD SURMISED, FOR THE JAP NORTH-WESTERN FRONT, WAS MAKING GOOD SPEED THROUGH THE OPEN COUNTRY...



BUT THE FIRST RAYS OF THE RISING SUN, GLINTING ALONG THE SINGLE LINE, MADE THE BROKEN GAP APPARENT TO THE SHARP-EYED ENGINEER.



INSTANTLY, THE SCREAM OF TORTURED BRAKES REACHED THE EARS OF THE AMBUSHERS.

STAND BY! SHE'S GOING TO PULL UP!

THIS IS IT, PETE!

HONOURABLE JAP HAS DISCOVERED OUR PERFDY, SAHIB MAJOR!



THE TRAIN SHUDDERED TO A HALT AMIDST A CLOUD OF STEAM WITHIN YARDS OF THE BREAK. WAS IT A TROOP TRAIN OR WAS IT MERELY CARRYING SUPPLIES?

WAIT!



OUT OF THE CORNER OF HIS EYE, MALCOLM NOTICED HIS MEN POISED EAGERLY FOR THE ATTACK. THAT DECIDED THE CHINDIT OFFICER— HE THRUST THE VEREY PISTOL INTO THE AIR AND PRESSED THE TRIGGER...

HERE WE GO!

THE SOARING SIGNAL HAD HARDLY REACHED ITS ZENITH WHEN THE CHINDITS LET FLY WITH A HAIL OF LEAD THAT BEAT A DEADLY TATTOO ON THE SIDES OF THE TRUCKS.

JUST A POLITE KNOCK BEFORE WE GO IN!

WITH THE EARLY CUPPA TEA, EH?



INSIDE THE WAGONS, TWO COMPANIES OF SLEEPY JAP INFANTRY WERE INTERRUPTED IN THEIR CURSING OF THE SUDDEN HALT WHEN THE SIDES OF THEIR TRUCKS WERE SUDDENLY PIERCED BY FLYING LEAD.



THEY FOUGHT BACK WITH THE FEROCIOUS SAVAGERY OF CORNERED ANIMALS. DOOR AFTER DOOR SLID OPEN AND THE FIGHT MOUNTED... UNTIL THE VALLEY WAS FILLED WITH THE DEAFENING CHORUS OF GUNS.



IN A SERIES OF SHORT, ALMOST SUICIDAL RUSHES, DOGGER BANKS AND A FEW OTHERS CLOSD WITH THE HALTED WAGONS...

SHARE THAT AMONGST YOU, 'EATHENS!

GET READY TO RUSH 'EM, LADS!



THE GRENADE EXPLODED DEAFENINGLY IN THE CONFINED SPACE AND THEN DOGGER'S PARTY STORMED ABOARD THE TRUCK...

HOLD THAT ONE, MATE!



HEY! LOOK...! AMMUNITION!

SUBADAR SINGH, TOO, WAS BRINGING HIS OWN SUBTLE ARTS TO BEAR ON THE SAME PROBLEM...

A CUNNING HAND NEEDS NO STRENGTH!

UGH!



SEEING NO PROFIT IN FURTHER FIGHTING, MALCOLM DECIDED TO BREAK OFF THE ACTION. HE FOUND THE TWO AMERICANS HIGHLY PLEASED WITH THEMSELVES.

OKAY, MAJOR!

JUST ONE MORE BURST FROM UNCLE SAM!

WE'LL KNOCK OFF NOW AND GET BACK UP THE HILL.



AT A BLAST FROM MALCOLM'S WHISTLE, THE CHINDITS VANISHED AS IF SPIRITED AWAY, TO RE-UNITE AGAIN, HIGH ON CHUKKERDUCK HILL.



THEIR STRONGHOLD WAS WELL CHOSEN. FROM THAT LOFTY POINT A CLOSE WATCH COULD BE KEPT ON THE RAILWAY. YET IT WAS A DIFFICULT POSITION FOR THE ENEMY TO ASSAIL.

LOOK, THOSE
JAPS ARE SPREADING
OUT THIS WAY!



THOUGHTFULLY, THE CHINDIT LEADER SUMMED UP THE SITUATION...

THIS RAILWAY MUST BE VITAL TO THE JAPS. IF WE HAD MORE MEN WE COULD KEEP IT CUT INDEFINITELY. AS IT IS, WE CAN ONLY MAKE OURSELVES A NUISANCE AND HOPE A MIRACLE WILL BRING US REINFORCEMENTS.



AS SAM PONDERED THESE WORDS, AN IDEA BEGAN TO FORM IN HIS MIND. EAGERLY, THE AMERICAN DREW HIS BUDDY, PETE, TO ONE SIDE...

PETE, WHAT A CHANCE FOR THE GLIDER BOYS! THE AIR COMMANDOS COULD FLY IN MORE CHINDITS, MORE ARMS, FOOD... THE LOT!

YEAH, BUT HOW ARE YA GOIN' TO GET WORD BACK WITHOUT A RADIO? WE'RE CUT OFF, PAL!



ONCE ALIGHT WITH HIS IDEA, SAM'S ENTHUSIASM COULD NOT BE QUENCHED. THERE *MUST* BE A WAY, HE DECIDED.

Chapter 4. THE PHANTOM RAIDERS

FOR TWO DAYS MALCOLM AND HIS CHINDITS WATCHED THE JAPS VAINLY COMB THE JUNGLE HILLS FOR SIGNS OF THEIR VANISHED ENEMY. MEANWHILE A REPAIR GANG HAD ARRIVED TO LAY FRESH TRACKS FOR THE WAITING TRAIN. IT WAS PLAIN THAT THE LINE WOULD SOON BE REOPENED.



THIS TRAIN WILL LEAVE—BUT I BET THOSE JAPS WON'T UNTIL THEY'VE GOT US CORNERED. SOMEHOW WE'VE GOT TO KEEP THAT LINE CUT.

ONCE AGAIN MALCOLM FOUND SAM AT HIS ELBOW... A SUPPRESSED EXCITEMENT SEEMED TO GRIP THE AMERICAN.



LOOK, MAJOR, YOU DON'T STAND A MONKEY'S CHANCE AGAINST ALL THESE NIPS. YOU WANT REINFORCEMENTS AND US AIR COMMANDOS COULD BRING THEM UP BY GLIDER!

FINE! AND HOW ARE YOU GOING TO WHISTLE THEM UP?



Air Commando

THE NEXT NIGHT MALCOLM ACTED. WITH A HANDFUL OF PICKED MEN HE SLIPPED PAST THE JAP CAMPS DOTTED ABOUT THE HILLSIDES AND REACHED THE RAILWAY UNSEEN.

FIRST DESPATCH THE SENTRIES TO THEIR ANCESTORS!

WE SHOULD HAVE SCUPPERED THAT LOCO LAST TIME, BUT WE'LL MAKE SURE OF IT NOW!



LIKE SINISTER PHANTOMS, THE JUNGLE RAIDERS CREPT CLOSE TO THE ARGUING SENTRIES.

NEI! NEI!
YOKOHAMA
NUMBER ONE,
KOBE NUMBER
TEN!

YOU
LIE!



THE SHRILL CHATTER OF THE JAPANESE WAS ABRUPTLY STILLED AS THE CHINDITS SPRANG UPON THEM...



ROCK-HARD FISTS AND STEEL-TIPPED GUN-BUTTS STIFLED ANY CRIES THE SENTRIES MIGHT HAVE MADE...



BUT, EVEN SO, THE SHORT, FIERCE STRUGGLE WAS HEARD BY OTHER JAPS . . .



HEEDLESS OF THE PERIL FROM ENEMY REINFORCEMENTS, DOGGER BANKS LEAPED INTO THE LOCOMOTIVE CAB AND TOSSED A COUPLE OF GRENADES INTO THE FIREBOX.



THE DEAFENING ESCAPE OF STEAM FROM THE ENGINE'S MANGLED BOILER TUBES COULD NOT DROWN THE VENGEFUL CRIES OF THE JAPANESE AS THEY SURGED AFTER THE RETREATING CHINDITS.



BUT THE DEADLY FIRE FROM THE RAIDERS' GUNS KEPT THE ENEMY AT ARM'S LENGTH AND THEY WERE ABLE TO MELT INTO THE JUNGLE UNHARMED.



WILD, ERRATIC GUNFIRE FOLLOWED THEM AND THE SOUNDS OF BATTLE REACHED THE SHARP EARS OF THOSE LEFT AT THE CAMP.

THE JAPS
ARE CHASING
THE MAJOR HOME!
COME ON!

EVERY SEPOY
HIS KNIFE! FOLLOW
MY BLADE!



THE SHOUTS AND BLUNDERING MOVEMENTS OF THE JAPS DREW THE SWIFT-MOVING CHINDITS LIKE TIGERS AFTER THEIR PREY...

GET 'EM!
BEFORE THEY CAN
GET AWAY!



MEANWHILE, THE SUBADAR'S SEPOYS WERE ALSO BUSY—STRIKING SILENTLY OUT OF THE GREEN JUNGLE.



THE JAPS WERE ROUTED AND THE JUBILANT CHINDITS ESCORTED THEIR LEADER BACK TO CAMP.

THAT WAS A NEAR GO! BUT WE DID WHAT WE SET OUT TO DO!

AYE! WE SHOWED THE LITTLE PERISHERS!



Air Commando

THE NIGHT PASSED WITHOUT ALARM, BUT ONE MAN AT LEAST, SAM BOLEY, HAD SCARCELY SLEPT. IN THE CHILL LIGHT OF DAWN HE ROUGHLY ROUSED HIS FELLOW AMERICAN.

LISTEN, WE'RE GETTING OUTA HERE—JUST YOU AND ME! THESE JAPS WILL KEEP ON COMING TILL THEY WIPE US OUT. WE GOTTA GET HELP—WE'RE LEAVING FOR HARRINGAY.

HARRINGAY!

NOTHING LESS THAN LOYALTY TO HIS PAL COULD HAVE MADE PETE AGREE TO WHAT HE CONSIDERED A CRAZY IDEA. AS THEY SLIPPED AWAY IN THE DAWN-LIGHT, CARRYING A SMALL SUPPLY OF FOOD, HE PROTESTED PLAINTIVELY...

HOW DO WE GET TO HARRINGAY? BY SUBWAY?

I'VE GOT A MAP AND A COMPASS. WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE AIRMEN, AREN'T WE? WE'LL NAVIGATE!

WITH PETE'S MUTTERING IN HIS EARS, SAM LED THE WAY INTO THE THICKLY MATTED JUNGLE...

Chapter 5. BATTLE OF CHUKKERDUCK HILL

BACK AT THE CAMP THE CHINDITS WERE FACING THE FIRST OF MANY ATTACKS FROM THE JAPANESE—FANATICAL IN THEIR SCREAMING WRATH AND SUICIDAL IN THEIR RUSHES.



INEVITABLY COMING OVER THE SCENE OF THE PREVIOUS NIGHT'S AMBUSH, THE ENEMY HAD TRACKED THE SIGNS LEADING TO MALCOLM'S STRONGHOLD. THE FIGHT WAS ON!

ALL THAT DAY THE SAVAGE ASSAULT WENT ON AND WHEN NIGHT CAME, THE SWEAT-SOAKED, BATTLE-GRIMED CHINDITS LISTENED AND WATCHED LIKE HAWKS WHILE HIDDEN JAP VOICES FLUNG THEIR TAUNTS.

YOO-HOO,
JOHNNY!

TOMORROW
YOU DIE!

PAY NO HEED,
SAHIB MAJOR.
LITTLE YELLOW MEN
WASTE BREATH.



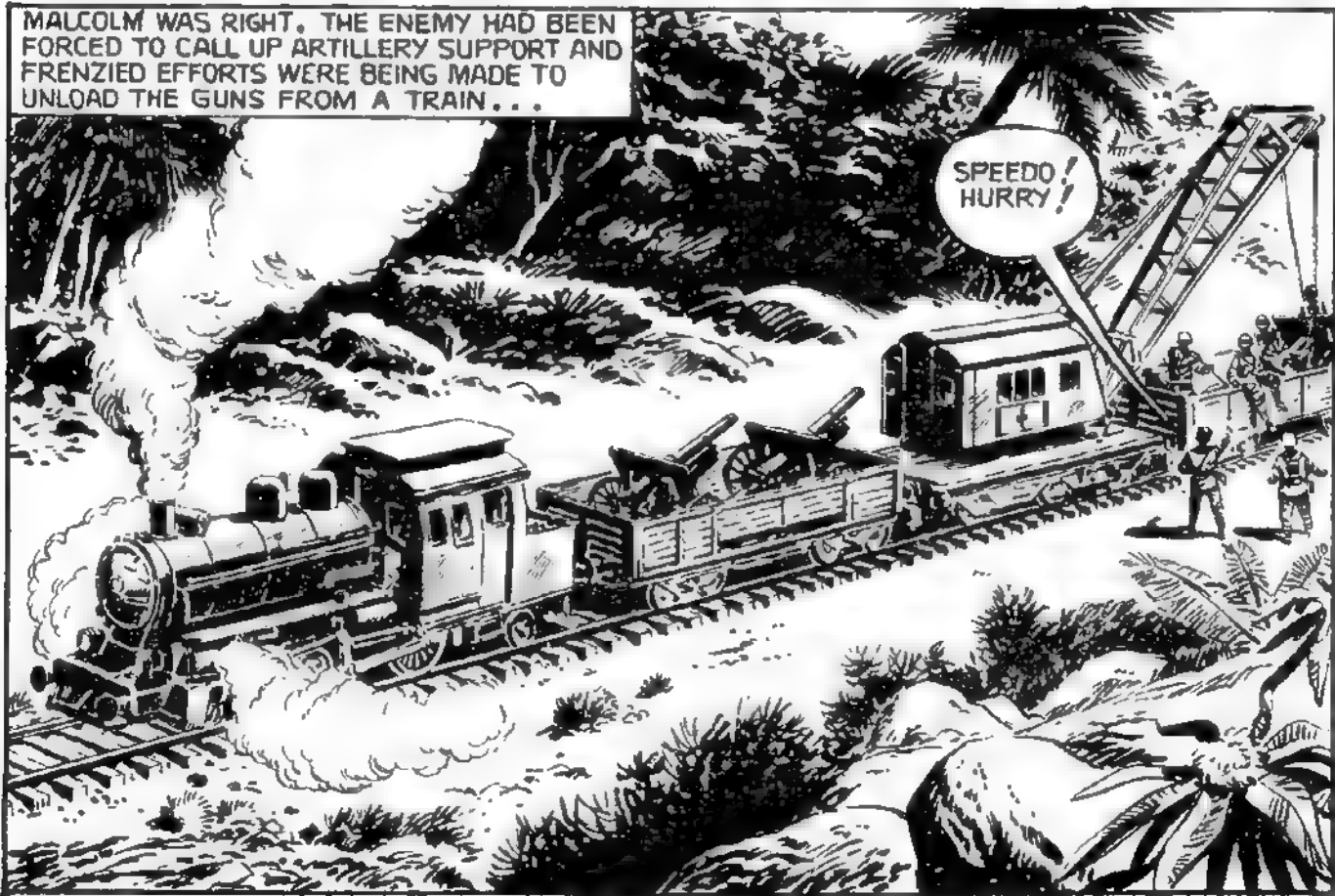
THE MORNING WAS STRANGELY SILENT AND SCANNING THE SCENE BELOW, MALCOLM SOON SAW THE REASON...

LOOK, THE LITTLE BEGGARS HAVE BROUGHT UP GUNS!

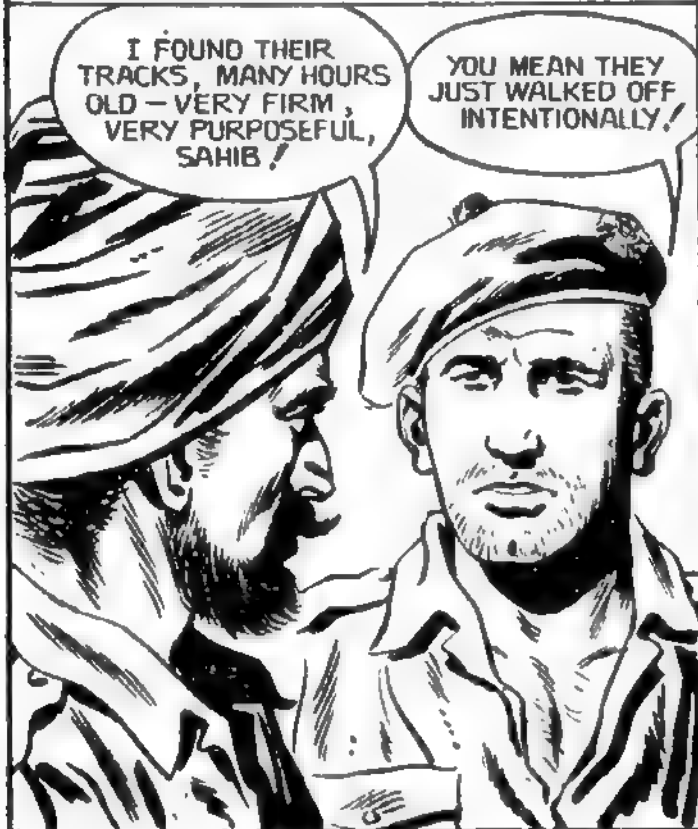


MALCOLM WAS RIGHT. THE ENEMY HAD BEEN FORCED TO CALL UP ARTILLERY SUPPORT AND FRENZIED EFFORTS WERE BEING MADE TO UNLOAD THE GUNS FROM A TRAIN...

SPEEDO!
HURRY!



IT WAS DURING THE MORNING THAT SUBADAR SINGH REPORTED THAT SAM AND PETE WERE MISSING FROM CAMP.



MALCOLM RECEIVED THE NEWS WITH MINGLED CONCERN AND ANNOYANCE.



MALCOLM QUICKLY PICKED UP THE AMERICANS' TRAIL, FOLLOWING FAINT SIGNS INVISIBLE TO ANY BUT THE EYE OF A JUNGLE-TRAINED MAN.



MEANWHILE, PETE HAD BADLY STRAINED A MUSCLE AND HAD AGREED WITH SAM TO RETURN TO CAMP. AFTER A DAY AND NIGHT ALONE IN THE JUNGLE, HE KNEW WITH A COLD PRICKLE OF SWEAT THAT HE WAS LOST.

MUSTN'T PANIC!
GOTTA KEEP CALM!
MUST FIND MY WAY
BACK!



SAM HAD BEEN TORN BETWEEN HIS CONCERN FOR PETE AND HIS SENSE OF DUTY. DOGGEDLY, HE BLUNDERED ON WITH THE STRAIN AND TORMENT OF THE EERIE JUNGLE BEGINNING TO SAP HIS STRENGTH.



SOMEWHERE IN THAT DENSE TANGLE OF UNDERGROWTH, MALCOLM HAD LOST THE AMERICANS' TRAIL, DESPITE HIS CHINDIT SKILL. BUT SUDDENLY, A MOVEMENT CAUGHT HIS EYE...

WHO'S THERE?



WITH A CRY, MALCOLM RAN TO CATCH A FAMILIAR FIGURE THAT SWAYED EXHAUSTEDLY.

PETE!
FOR HEAVENS!
SAKE, WHERE'S
SAM?

SAM'S GONE.
MILES AWAY.
GOTTA GET
HELP!



Air Commando

SAM FOUGHT HIS WAY ONWARDS, ACHING IN EVERY LIMB, SCARCELY ABLE TO PUT ONE FOOT BEFORE THE OTHER—ALL UNAWARE THAT HE WAS WALKING STRAIGHT INTO THE ENEMY.



HIS FIRST WARNING WAS THE HARSH CLAT... AND ORANGE MUZZLE FLASH OF A JAPANESE MACHINE-GUN...



THE UNWARY GLIDER PILOT'S BODY PLUNGED DOWN INTO A JUNGLE-CHOKED GULLY.



THE OVERHANGING CREEPERS AND FOLIAGE PREVENTED THE JAP PATROL FROM SEEING ANY SIGNS OF THEIR VICTIM AND THEY MOVED ON, CONFIDENT THAT THE FIGURE HAD BEEN RIDDLED WITH BULLETS.



IT TOOK A FULL DAY FOR THE JAPS TO BRING THEIR GUNS INTO ACTION AND THE FOLLOWING DAWN THE BATTERY FIRED A FEW SITING SHOTS ON THE CHINDIT POSITION. IT WAS AN IDEAL GUNNERS' TARGET AND THEY SAVOURED THEIR TASK WITH SLOW RELISH.



THE CHINDITS WERE BRACING THEMSELVES FOR THE BARRAGE THAT MUST FOLLOW WHEN TWO FIGURES APPEARED AT THE EDGE OF THE JUNGLE.

IT'S THE MAJOR - AND ONE OF THE YANKS!

COMING, SIR!



BY SHEER GRIT AND INDOMITABLE STRENGTH, MALCOLM HAD FOUGHT HIS WAY BACK TO THE BASE WITH THE HALF-CONSCIOUS PETE.

AND IT WAS AT ALMOST THE SAME TIME THAT SAM BOLEY WAS FOUND BY A PATROL OF CHINDITS FROM HARRINGAY. HE HAD BEEN UNTOUCHED BY THE JAPS' BULLETS AND HAD STAGGERED ON TOWARDS HIS OBJECTIVE WITH GALLANT OBSTINACY. THE CHINDITS LISTENED EAGERLY TO HIS STORY...

COME ON, MATE, WE'LL TAKE YOU TO THE BRIGADIER!

SURE - HE'LL LAY ON HELL FOR THOSE JAPS OF YOURS!



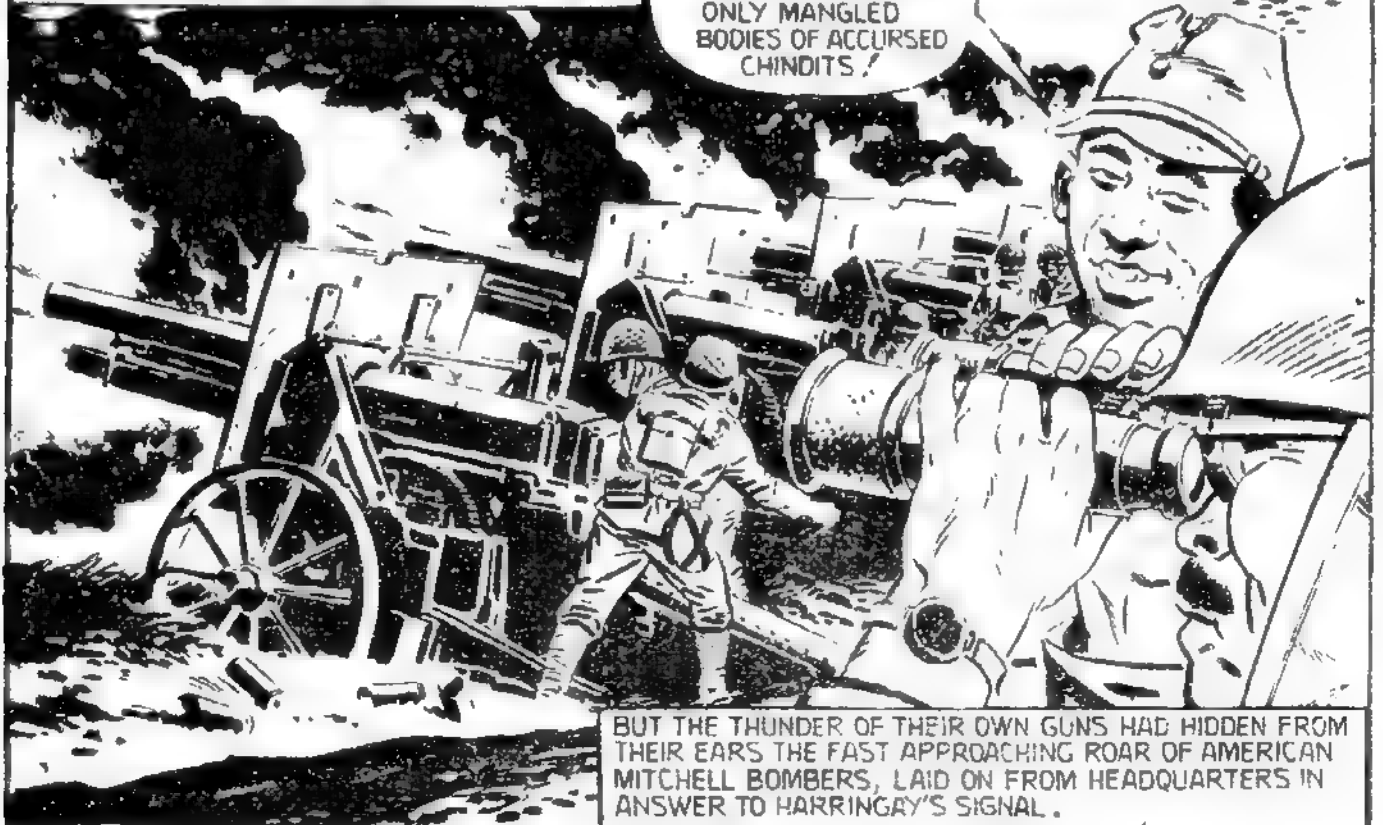
HE'LL HAVE TO BE QUICK - OR THE OTHERS WILL BE OVER-RUN!

AS THE BURMA SUN CLIMBED HIGH INTO THE BRASSY SKY, THE JAP SHELLING BEGAN IN EARNEST—FIRST IN SINGLE ROUNDS, AS IF TASTING THE PLEASURE OF PRECISION, AND THEN IN STEADY SUCCESSION. THE CHINDITS COULD DO NOTHING BUT LIE LOW AND TAKE IT.



FOR TWO GRUELLING HOURS, THE JAP GUNNERS KEPT UP THE BARRAGE, HURLING SALVO AFTER SALVO AT THAT TINY HILL-TOP.

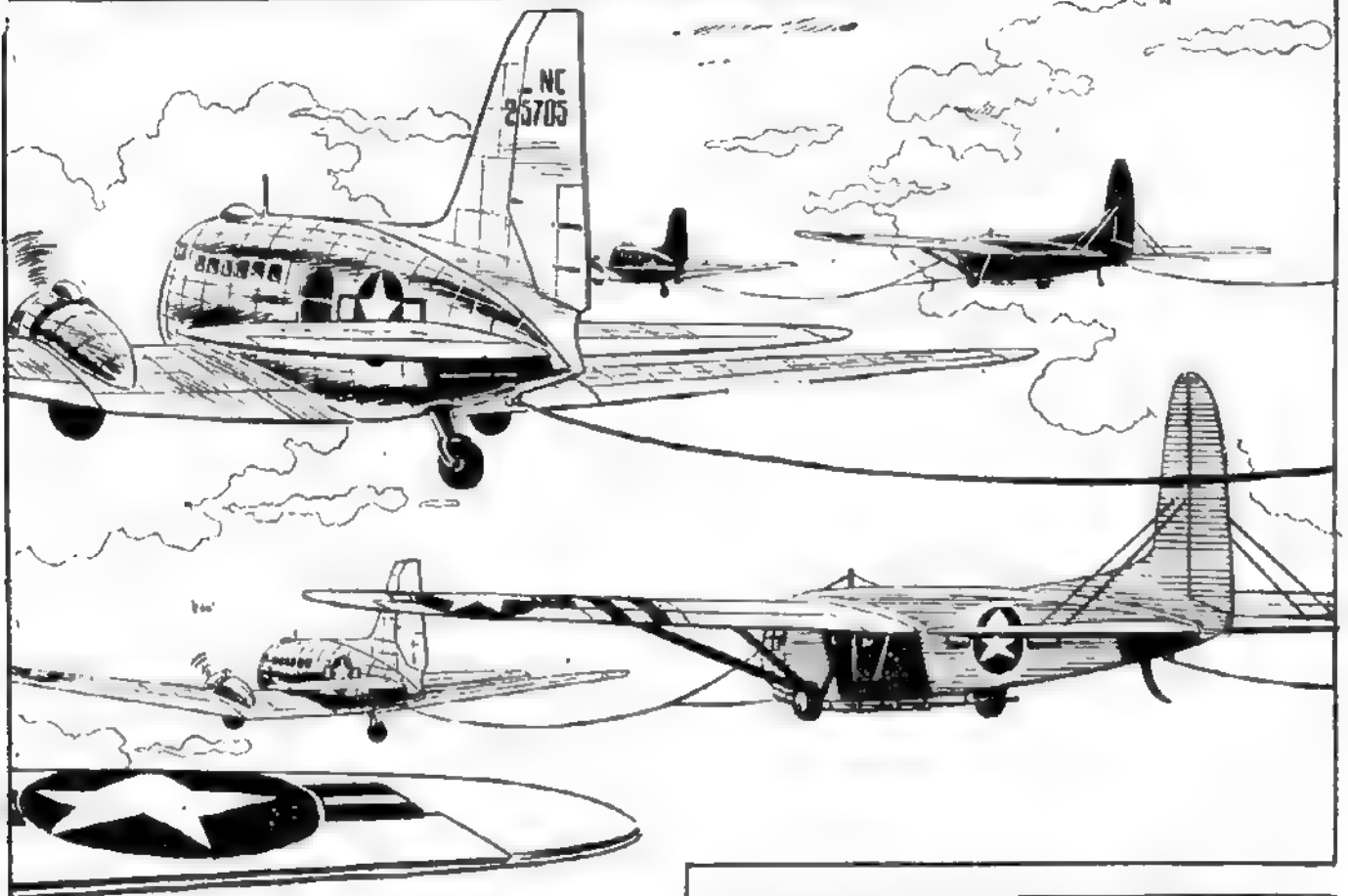
THERE WILL BE NOTHING FOR OUR INFANTRY TO FIND. ONLY MANGLED BODIES OF ACCURSED CHINDITS!



WITH THE TIDAL FORCE OF A TYPHOON, VENGEFUL DESTRUCTION SWEEPED UPON THE JAPANESE GUNNERS. PANIC-STRICKEN AT THE TOTALLY UNEXPECTED ATTACK, THEY DESERTED THEIR GUNS AND FLED FROM THE HOLOCAUST THAT THREATENED TO ENGULF THEM.



THE JAP INFANTRY HESITATED—A PAUSE THAT WAS TO COST THEM DEARLY—FOR ACROSS THE JUNGLE TOPS THERE SWEEPED AN ARMADA OF DAKOTA-TOWED GLIDERS. EACH WAS PACKED WITH CHINDITS, FIERCELY RESOLVED TO RESCUE THEIR GALLANT COMRADES FROM THE DEATH-TRAP THAT WAS CHUKKERDUCK HILL.



IF EVERY MAN HAS HIS SUPREME MOMENT, THIS SURELY MUST HAVE BEEN SAM BOLEY'S. SITTING BESIDE THE PILOT OF THE LEADING GLIDER, THE AMERICAN'S FACE SHONE WITH EXCITEMENT AND PRIDE AS THE AIR COMMANDO GLIDERS BEGAN TO FLOAT OVER BESIEGED CHUKKERDUCK.

THERE THEY ARE!
BY GLORY, NOW I'LL
SHOW THAT STUBBORN
STREAK OF A McDUFF
JUST WHAT GLIDERS
CAN DO!



THE GLIDERS CUT FREE FROM THEIR TUG-PLANES AND SWEEPED DOWN TO THE BASE OF THE HILL, TO DISGORGE THEIR LOADS.

DUMP YOUR HEAVY KIT BY THE TREES—AND THEN CARRY STRAIGHT ON UP THE HILL. YOU'LL FIND COMMAND H.Q. HALF-WAY UP...



FROM THE HILL-TOP STRONGPOINT, MALCOLM WATCHED THE DRAMATIC ARRIVAL OF THE GLIDER REINFORCEMENTS WITH WONDERING DISBELIEF IN HIS EYES...

HERE COME THE JAPS, SIR!

GREAT HEAVENS...! SAM MUST HAVE GOT THROUGH...

WHAT DID WE ALWAYS TELL YOU, MAJOR?

A WARNING CRY FROM CORPORAL DOGGER BANKS BROKE THE SPELL...



SENSING THE SUDDEN TURN OF FORTUNE, THE JAP INFANTRY LAUNCHED ITSELF IN A CHARGE MORE FEROCIOUSLY SUICIDAL THAN ANY SO FAR, ONLY TO MEET WITH THE SAME WITHERING RECEPTION FROM THE STUBBORN DEFENDERS, NOW BUOYED BY NEW HOPE.



ONCE MORE THE DESPERATE CHARGE WAS FLUNG BACK, ONLY TO RENEW ITSELF AGAIN AND YET AGAIN WITH SICKENING DISREGARD FOR LOSSES.



THE DIN OF THAT BITTER STRUGGLE REACHED THE EARS OF THE REINFORCEMENTS FRANTICALLY STRUGGLING UP THE JUNGLE-CLAD MOUNTAINSIDE, SPURRING THEM ON TO ALMOST SUPERHUMAN EFFORTS. AT LAST THEY BROKE OUT OF THE UNDERGROWTH INTO THE HILL-TOP CLEARING WHERE JAPS AND CHINDITS WERE LOCKED IN A LAST HAND TO HAND FIGHT TO THE DEATH.



WITH BLACK DESPAIR IN THEIR EYES, THE JAPS TURNED TO FACE THE CHINDIT REINFORCEMENTS, KNOWING FULL WELL THAT THEIR DOOM WAS SEALED. MALCOLM AND PETE HAD A MOMENT TO GRASP THE HAND OF THE JUBILANT SAM...

YOU OLD SON OF A McDUFF! GLAD TO SEE YOU!

I DON'T CARE WHOSE SON HE IS, SAM—THE MAJOR GOT ME OUT OF THE JUNGLE!



GRATEFULLY, PETE TOLD HOW MALCOLM HAD TRACKED THEM AND HAD BROUGHT HIM BACK TO BASE. THEN SAM RELATED HIS EPIC MARCH TO HARRINGAY AND THE BATTLED-SCARRED CHINDIT LEADER GREETED THE AMERICAN'S FINAL WORDS WITH A WIDE GRIN...

...AND BRIGADIER KNOX SAYS, 'ANY COMPLAINTS ABOUT AMERICAN AIR COMMANDOS?'

YOU'VE GOT ME COMPLETELY SOLD ON GLIDERS—I'LL TELL THE BRIGADIER MYSELF! AND AS FOR YOU, SAM, ANY TIME YOU WANT TO JOIN THE CHINDITS, THERE'LL BE A PLACE FOR YOU!



Air Commando

THE FRESH CHINDIT TROOPS TOOK OVER THE CHUKKERDUCK HILL STRONGPOINT TO CONTINUE THE THROTTLING GRIP ON THE ENEMY SUPPLY ROUTE. A WHILE LATER, AT HARRINGAY, BRIGADIER KNOX WAS DELIGHTED WITH MALCOLM'S FRANK ADMISSION...



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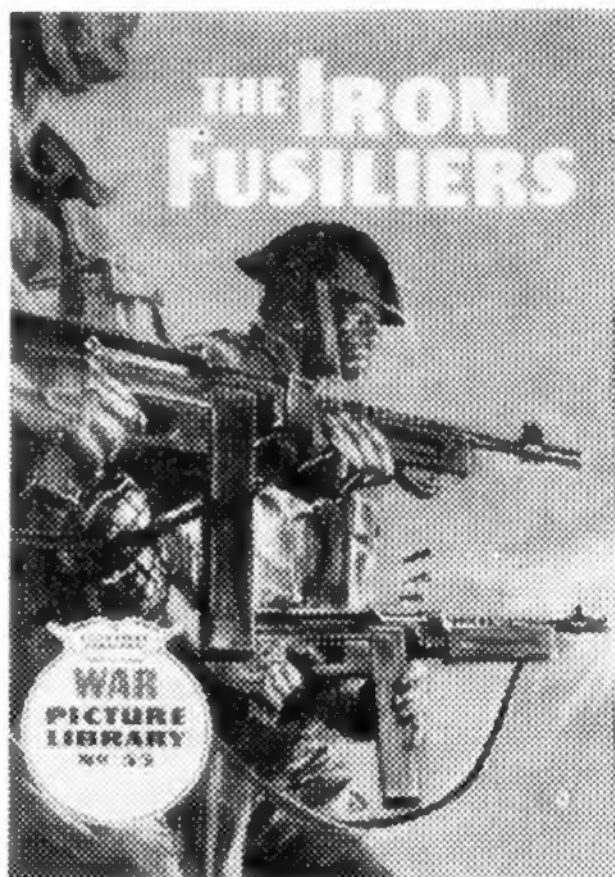
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